

# DHEC Home Care Teaching: Negative Pressure Wound Therapy



## I. What is Negative Pressure Wound Therapy and how does it work?



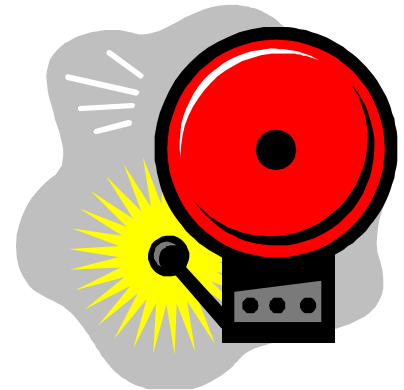
Negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT) is a treatment that removes excess fluid from your wound and improves blood flow so it can heal faster. The treatment uses a small computer-controlled machine that pulls extra fluid through the dressing, into a tube and then finally into a clear collection container. The machine is plugged into a wall outlet but does have battery back-up. For the best results, your doctor wants you to stay on the machine at all times. You can use the battery back-up if you need to take a shower or go to the doctor's office. Your nurse will teach you about how and when to use the battery back-up.

## II. What does the dressing look like and does it hurt?

A gauze or foam dressing is placed on your wound and then covered with a clear dressing. Your doctor will decide how often the dressing needs to be changed; usually it is 2-3 times a week. When the machine is on, suction pulls the dressing tight and makes an air-tight seal. Once the seal is tight, the machine will draw off the extra wound fluid. Most patients say they feel a mild pulling feeling that goes away after a few minutes. You shouldn't feel pain, but your wound may be tender or itch as it heals.

## III. What will make the alarm sound?

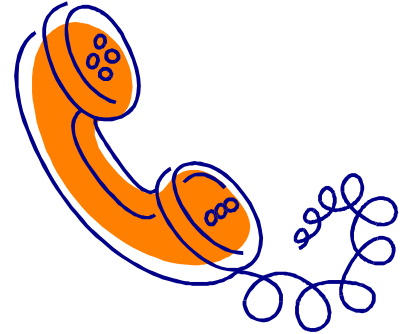
- If the clear container is full or the tubing is kinked or blocked. Replace the container if it is full, or straighten the tubing if it is kinked.
- If the clear container turns on its side, even if it isn't full. Place the container upright (straight up).
- If the clamps become closed. Check the clamps to make sure they are open.
- If the dressing is not on tight or if air is leaking around the tubing. You may hear a whistling sound. Place a clear tape dressing around the tubing or over areas where the dressing is loose.
- If the battery needs to be recharged. Plug the machine into a wall outlet to charge it.
- If the machine is turned off for more than 15 minutes. Check to make sure the machine is turned on.



Information continued on next page > > >

## IV. When should I call my nurse?

- ✓ **CALL IF THE ALARM SOUNDS:** As time passes, you will learn more about this therapy and how to solve problems with the machine, the dressing and the alarm. Even if you are able to fix the problem and turn off the alarm, you should let the nurse know about any alarms.
- ✓ Call if a large amount of blood is draining into the clear container in a short period of time.
  1. Turn off the machine.
  2. Do not remove the tubing or clear dressing.
  3. Fasten the clamp.
  4. Apply pressure over the clear dressing by pressing down with your hand.
  5. **CALL YOUR NURSE OR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.**
- ✓ Call if you notice a big change in color or type of wound fluid.
- ✓ Call if you see more redness around your wound.
- ✓ Call if you notice an odor coming from your wound.
- ✓ Call if you have more pain in or around your wound.
- ✓ Call if the machine has to be turned off because of problems with the dressing, or with the machine. **YOU MUST CALL WITHIN TWO HOURS.** The nurse will teach you how to put on another type of dressing to keep the wound moist. You must use this other dressing anytime the machine is off.
- ✓ Call if you are throwing up, have a sore throat, are confused, have a fever greater than 102°, and/or a sunburn-like rash. These may be signs of a serious infection. You should tell your nurse or doctor if you notice any of these problems right away.



The nurse will review with you the educational materials provided by the company that makes the machine. After reviewing the information, you will be more comfortable working with the machine and knowing when to call the nurse or doctor